

Claims

1. An incentive benefit program to encourage selected activities by users of a data network where a user is provided an opportunity to engage in the selected activity, and a benefit provider presents to the user an offer of compensation in return for the user electing to engage in the selected activity, wherein:

at least upon an initial opportunity to engage in the selected activity, the user instructs the benefit provider to assign the compensation to a pre-existing third party benefits program to which the user has previously joined;

the user being identified to the benefit provider by the identity of the benefit account, the user remaining substantially anonymous with respect to the benefit provider;

the compensation comprising additions of value to the benefits account.

2. The incentive benefit program of claim 1 wherein the third party benefits account comprises at least one of: a frequent flier program, a video rental program or a grocery store discount program.

3. The incentive benefit program of claim 1 wherein the third party benefits program is associated with a user by an account number, and the user maintains a relationship with a third party that operates the third party benefit program whereby the third party has access to information about the user that is of inherent value;

the inherent value comprising at least one of: an ability to directly contact the user, and an ability to gain monetarily from the user.

4. The incentive benefit program of claim 3 wherein the inherently valuable information about the user comprises at least one of: an email address, a home address, a business address, a home telephone number, a business telephone number, a credit card number, a driver license number and a social security number.

5. The incentive benefit program of claim 3 wherein the benefit provider has access to information about the user that is limited to the account number of the third party benefits program.

6. The incentive benefit program of claim 1 wherein the data network includes the Internet.

7. The incentive benefit program of claim 1 wherein the selected activity includes viewing advertisements provided by advertising providers on behalf of advertisers.

8. The incentive benefit program of claim 7 wherein the advertising provider has been told by advertisers which advertisements to include in the benefits program.

9. The incentive benefit program of claim 7 wherein the advertising provider has access to the inherently valuable information about the user.

10. The incentive benefit program of claim 1 wherein the benefit provider determines which third party benefits programs are available to the user for use with the incentive benefit program.

11. The incentive benefit program of claim 7 wherein the advertiser determines which third party benefits programs are available to the user for use with the incentive benefit program.
12. The incentive benefit program of claim 7 wherein the benefit provider and the advertising provider are independent entities.
13. The incentive benefit program of claim 7 wherein the benefit provider and the advertising provider are operated by a common entity.
14. The incentive program of claim 1 wherein a benefit incorporates a lottery mechanism.